

agricultural situation

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**SUNFLOWERS:
COMING ON STRONG**

SUNFLOWERS: COMING ON STRONG

Despite a 75-percent increase in prospective acreage this year, sunflowers are not a contender for the top oilseed spot yet. But soybeans, which are No. 1, may face some stiff competition in the years ahead.

In fact, the time may come when the two will split the market honors—with sunflowers taking over as the premier oil crop and soybeans serving as the protein crop.

Although the sunflower is native to the Americas, sustained production of oilseed varieties began in the U.S. only 13 years ago. Since then, acreage has soared.

Plantings last year totaled over 3 million acres—more than the area planted to such oilseed crops as peanuts or safflower or to grains such as rice or rye. The 75-percent increase in acreage planned for this year would push the sunflower total to more than 5 million acres.

The big sunflower States currently are North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Texas. In the northern production area the acreage gains have come at the expense of flax, wheat, barley, and other small grains.

In the future, the crop may gain ground in other areas, too, especially on the fringes of soybean, corn, and cotton areas where yields of these crops are comparatively low.

For the four major sunflower-producing States, farmers received an average of 10.7 cents a pound on last year's crop (oil varieties). Based on an average yield of 1,383 pounds per acre, sunflowers earned nearly \$148 an acre. Of course, each producer faced a different situation according to his management practices and the production costs, land,

and weather in his area.

Although soybeans offered a higher U.S.-average return per acre, the two crops are not generally rivals for the same piece of ground. However, sunflowers can compete well with soybeans in some areas because they have a shorter growing season and usually do better under drought conditions.

In the South, sunflower plantings have caught on rapidly since cutbacks in cotton allotments several years ago. Sunflowers have served not only as another cash crop for Southern farmers, but have also filled some slack in cottonseed mills left with excess crushing capacity.

Sunflowers have blossomed so rapidly largely because of two breakthroughs which vastly improved oil production.

The first was the development in the 1960's of sunflower varieties with an oil content of over 40 percent, a one-third increase over previous varieties. The second breakthrough, which came in the 1970's, was the development of hybrid sunflowers, which boosted yields another 25 percent.

In 1977, the year U.S. farmers made a major shift from open-pollinated to hybrids, hybrids took over 90 percent of the planted area. And new hybrids in various stages of development promise even better disease and insect resistance as well as higher oil content.

Plant breeders equate the current stage of sunflower development with that of corn in the early 1930's before widespread use of hybrid seed.

In other words, they figure there's room for bigger gains in both production per acre and in oil yields in the years ahead—which would make sunflowers a more profitable crop for farmers and, consequently, an even stronger rival of soybeans in oil markets.

Oil yields of soybeans have been relatively static since 1953. Prior to that, those increases which did

occur were mostly due to better extraction techniques which recovered more of the oil.

Its excellence as an oil crop is the sunflower's biggest asset. Oilseed sunflowers yield over 40 percent oil, whereas soybeans yield about 18 percent. And on a per pound basis, oil is more valuable than meal.

As a consequence, sunflowers are grown primarily for their oil—which contributes roughly 75 percent of the crop's proportionate value, compared with 40 percent for soybean oil. And it is in oil markets where the sunflower stands to make its biggest gains in the future.

Sunflower meal, although it's just about as high in protein content as soybean meal when the hulls are removed, is handicapped by its high fiber content. Consequently, it is at a disadvantage in the meal market.

Exports are currently the major market for oilseed sunflowers, taking between 70 and 80 percent of the U.S. crop. Western Europe is the biggest buyer—preferring sunflower oil over many other food oils.

However, domestic food use of sunflower oil is expected to expand now that there is a dependable supply of U.S. oilseed sunflowers available for crushing.

Sunflower oil is higher in polyunsaturates than corn oil and is much more stable than safflower oil. Thus, it has an edge over these two competitors for use in premium grade margarine and cooking and salad oils.

Sunflower oil's higher price tag currently bars it from making substantial inroads against soybean oil in the vegetable shortening and lower priced vegetable oil margarine markets.

However, blended sunflower/soybean oil products are already on the market in some parts of the country, and their use could grow in the years ahead. So, instead of being rivals, the two oilseeds could eventually end up partners in many of the world's fats and oils markets.

THE STATISTICS



USDA's Crop Reporting Board reports on sunflower acreage and production in the Big Four producing States—Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and Texas.

However, there have been a number of industry requests to expand coverage to other States and to include information on stocks.

As part of the Federal estimating program, the Crop Reporting Board reports on prospective sunflower plantings in January and April and on planted acreage in late June. The June and October crop production reports include coverage of production and prices.

Firms contracting sunflower acreage are asked to furnish data on the seed handled from the prior crop and the acreage under contract during the current year.

This information is used to supplement the data provided by sunflower producers in mail surveys and helps to true up the statistics in a summary published each January. That report wraps up the acreage planted and yields harvested—plus providing separate estimates of prices and values of both oil and nonoil sunflower varieties.

A LITTLE COMPETITION NEVER HURT A WHALE

Three little-known oilseed plants may be on the way to putting U.S. farmers in direct competition with the sperm whale—to the benefit of both.

Since 1971, when the sperm whale was placed on the U.S. endangered species list and sperm oil imports were banned, the use of sperm oil has been almost nonexistent in this country. But the USSR and Japan continue to kill the whales in great numbers.

What makes sperm oil so special is that it consists mainly of liquid waxes than can withstand high temperatures and pressures as the oil lubricates gears and bearings.

To ease the demand for the fine sperm whale oil—prized for its use in an array of products from cosmetics to automatic transmission fluid—researchers have developed commercial oils from petroleum. But there are many (car manufacturers in particular) who are less than pleased with the results.

In a search for better substitutes for sperm oil, USDA is studying three oilseeds: jojoba, a scruffy desert shrub; crambe, a bushy member of the mustard family; and meadowfoam (*Limnanthes*), a flowering Pacific Coast annual.

Jojoba, the crop USDA researchers contend has the greatest potential for replacing sperm oil, grows wild in the deserts of Arizona, California, and Mexico. The oil from its peanut-sized seeds is so similar to sperm oil that it has already been tabbed as an effective replacement by many industry officials.

Jojoba oil, unlike the oil from meadowfoam and crambe, needs no chemical processing to produce a wax almost identical to sperm oil.

USDA researchers found jojoba oil has actually proved to be as much as four times more effective than sperm oil in certain experiments

measuring durability in automatic transmissions.

The major problem associated with jojoba production is assuring a reliable supply to meet industrial demand. Unlike meadowfoam and crambe, which can be harvested at least once each year, it takes 5 years before the jojoba plant can be first harvested.

A principal advantage in growing jojoba is that it requires little water. In areas of low rainfall (5-6 inches per year) and low soil fertility, jojoba can grow to 4 feet in height. With rainfall of 16 inches and medium soil fertility, plants have exceeded 10 feet.

Because of the long growing time of jojoba, research efforts have been aimed at increasing the seed production of existing plants. One new technique, water harvesting—gathering and storing runoff from rain or snow on nearby desert land—has dramatically increased the yield of seeds on existing bushes in areas that average only 9 inches of rain per year.

For the past 6 years, several Indian tribes in the Southwest have grown jojoba. Since 1972, \$3.5 million of Federal, State, and regional money has gone for development of the Indian jojoba industry.

Another plant capable of producing an oil similar to that of sperm oil is **crambe**. Crambe is not an American native—it originates in the sunny Mediterranean area and Africa.

Crambe seeds were first introduced into the U.S. by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in the 1940's. Tests from Alaska to Louisiana have shown that the plant is tough and takes well to any area with a cool planting season.

Crambe seeds closely resemble

mustard seeds, although larger in size. They can be planted in early spring and harvested 3 months later. Because of this short growing time, another crambe crop can be planted around mid-July or as soon as possible after the first crambe harvest in some locations. Crop yields have averaged about 1,500 pounds of seeds per acre.

Oil from crambe seed is an industrial oil containing erucic acid, which after chemical refining can be converted into wax esters similar to sperm oil.

In addition to its use as a sperm oil substitute, crambe oil has potential in a number of other industrial products, one of which is plastics. Also, when the oil is removed, a relatively high protein meal is produced from crambe seed which can be processed as cattle feed.

Although the market potential for crambe byproducts seems good, farmers aren't exactly rushing to grow the crop. The main production drawback has centered on the scarcity of factories to process the seed and the lack of herbicides to control weeds. Despite these problems crambe is grown commercially on a small scale in Montana, North Dakota, and several other States.

USDA scientists suggest that once the bugs are worked out of crambe oil production, there will be a sizable potential market for it.

Meadowfoam (so called because its thick, white flowers look like a foamy seaspray) seeds contain a unique vegetable oil that by chemical transformation can be converted into liquid wax esters similar to those of sperm oil.

A winter annual native to the Pacific Northwest, its seeds are sown in southern Oregon and northern California in November and harvested in May, leaving time for another crop to be planted and harvested.

The main problem with producing meadowfoam is its tendency to sprawl and lose its seeds right at harvest time. Fortunately, with 8 species and 11 varieties growing wild on the West Coast, the chances of breeding the plant to get more upright growth and better seed retention are good.

In fact, one variety called "Foamore" has shown an average seed yield of 1,000 to 1,400 pounds per acre. USDA scientists are confident that meadowfoam holds promise as a replacement for sperm oil.



IMPROVING ON MOTHER NATURE

As pressures of limited resources and an expanding world population mount, continued progress in the area of agricultural technology becomes more critical. In the next 20 years, the world's population is expected to almost double to nearly 7 billion people.

Of the technologies which may have a major impact on agriculture early in the next century, photosynthesis enhancement is among the most promising.

Although scientists may have good reason to avoid extravagant promises about an all-too-uncertain future, it's clear that they're bullish on photosynthesis enhancement. And if it's too early to speculate about superplants in the next century, that could be because we're still exploring the potential of photosynthetic technology.

Not that it's new to science. Researchers have been working for some time on improving on nature's unique process of photosynthesis. They say that crop production could be increased dramatically if ways can be found to help plants make more efficient use of solar energy in converting light to food and fiber.

The average acre of land now in farming yields slightly more than a ton of edible material per year because plants use only 1 to 3 percent of the sunlight that reaches them. Most of the light is lost by reflection or is absorbed by parts of the plant that don't need it.

However, experts estimate that the average acre of farmland could theoretically produce 30 to 50 times more edible product if full use were made of the available sunlight.

Scientists view the problem as the result of a natural conflict: the needs of a plant versus the needs of man.

Over the years, plants have evolved for the purpose of their own survival and not to produce food, fiber, and fuel for man.

To halt the waste of solar energy, researchers must find out what limits a plant's ability to use light so they can work to improve the energy transformation process.

Growth regulators and hormones have been successfully used to create physical changes in plants. Using this method, scientists hope to alter the structure of plants to increase their photosynthetic capabilities. Already, the shapes of plants have been changed so that more leaf area is exposed to the sun, thus improving their sunlight trapping system and increasing yields.

Today new breeds of barley, wheat, and corn with more erect leaves for sun interception are being widely harvested.

Also, the period a plant absorbs light can be extended by changing its biological processes to allow it to withstand environmental stresses, such as cold weather.

Once a plant has been "built" to absorb more solar energy, researchers will also attempt to alter the energy distribution system within a plant. The goal will be maximum energy to be transported to the part of the plant that is edible and minimum energy to the rest.

Scientists have been successful with new breeds of sugarbeet plants which allocate more energy than their ancestors to the roots used for sugar production.

While much research is aimed at increasing food production, improving the nutritional content of food through photosynthesis enhancement is another goal scientists are optimistic about.

Whatever the future holds, the same teamwork between farmers and scientists that boosted agricultural productivity in the past will be needed in the future if farmers here and abroad are to feed a growing world.

THE TOP STATES

Although U.S. farm product exports come from all across the Nation, 10 States accounted for over 60 percent of fiscal 1978's record export value of \$27.3 billion. Illinois was again the leader, accounting for nearly \$2.8 billion in agricultural export sales.

Iowa, second at about \$2.1 billion, was followed closely by Texas and California. The other six States, all between the \$1.5 and \$1 billion mark, were Minnesota, Indiana, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and Ohio.

Leading States varied for the five major export commodities—soybeans, feed grains, wheat, cotton, and tobacco—which together accounted for 71 percent of the total U.S. agricultural export value last year.

For soybeans, which moved from second to first place in export value among U.S. farm commodities, the five leading States were Illinois,

Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, and Minnesota. With soybean products added in, nearly 50 percent of the U.S. soybean harvest was exported last year.

Over half of the feed grain export value came from four Corn Belt States—Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, and Indiana. Feed grain exports represented about 30 percent of U.S. production.

Kansas and North Dakota accounted for almost 30 percent of wheat and flour exports. Over 60 percent of U.S. wheat was exported during fiscal 1978.

Texas, California, Mississippi, Arizona, and Arkansas were the export leaders in cotton. About 44 percent of all U.S. cotton production was exported.

For tobacco, the fifth largest U.S. farm export commodity, four States—North Carolina, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Georgia—accounted for over 80 percent of total export value. About one-third of all U.S. tobacco was exported last year.

LEADING STATES BY EXPORT SHARES¹ Fiscal 1978

	United States	Five leading States by rank				
		1	2	3	4	5
<i>Million dollars</i>						
All commodities	27,298	Ill. 2,770	Iowa 2,115	Texas 2,074	Calif. 1,927	Minn. 1,485
Soybeans and products	6,411	Ill. 1,224	Iowa 915	Mo. 542	Ind. 525	Minn. 487
Feed grains and products	5,983	Ill. 1,104	Iowa 814	Neb. 722	Ind. 598	Minn. 474
Wheat and products	4,139	Kansas 741	N. Dak. 420	Okla. 377	Mont. 253	Texas 253
Cotton including linters	1,707	Texas 652	Calif. 331	Miss. 195	Ariz. 135	Ark. 123
Tobacco	1,132	N.C. 564	Ky. 140	S.C. 107	Ga. 104	Va. 97

¹The export shares shown were derived from the contribution of each State to national output or sales and are not actual measurements of State origins of listed commodities.

JULY

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

2 Poultry Slaughter	3	4 Holiday	5 Noncitrus Fruits & Nuts - Midyear Supplement; Celery	6 Milk
9 Vegetables	10	11 Crop Production	12	13 Milk Production; Tall Fescue Seed (Southern States)
16	17	18 Egg Products	19 Cattle on Feed; Lamb Crop & Wool; Cold Storage	20 Livestock Slaughter; Eggs, Chickens, & Turkeys; Naval Stores
23	24	25 Cattle; Peanut Stocks & Processing	26	27
30	31 Dairy Products; Com. Fertilizers; Agricultural Prices			

SEPTEMBER

3 Holiday	4 Poultry Slaughter	5 Celery	6	7
10 Vegetables	11	12 Crop Production	13 Egg Products; Milk Production	14 Cattle on Feed; Peanut Stocks & Proc. Sess. Rept.; Hop Stocks
17	18	19 Cold Storage	20 Soybean Stocks; Hogs & Pigs; Livestock Slaughter; Naval Stores	21 Eggs, Chickens, & Turkeys
24	25 Peanut Stocks & Processing	26 Honey Production	27	28 Com. Fertilizers; Citrus Fruits; Agricultural Prices

NOVEMBER

			1 Poultry Slaughter; Dairy Products	2 Egg Products; Com. Fertilizers - Final
5 Celery	6	7	8 Vegetables	9 Crop Production
12 Holiday	13 Milk Production	14 Cattle on Feed	15 Sheep & Lambs on Feed	16
19 Cold Storage	20 Livestock Slaughter; Naval Stores	21 Eggs, Chickens, & Turkeys; Farm Labor	22 Holiday	23 Peanut Stocks & Processing
26	27	28	29	30 Dairy Products; Com. Fertilizers; Agricultural Prices

CROP REPORTING BOARD REPORTS July-December 1979

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

AUGUST

		1 Poultry Slaughter	2	3 Field Seed Stocks
6 Celery	7	8 Vegetables	9 Tall Fescue Seed (Oreg.)	10 Crop Production
13 Milk Production; Mushrooms	14 Cattle on Feed	15 Com. Apples by Varieties	16 Veg. Seed Stocks; Egg Products	17
20 Livestock Slaughter; Cold Storage; Naval Stores	21 Cranberries	22 Eggs, Chickens, & Turkeys	23 Rice Stocks; Timothy Seed; Farm Labor	24 Peanut Stocks & Processing; Potatoes & Sweetpotatoes
27	28	29	30	31 Dairy Products; Com. Fertilizers; Agricultural Prices

OCTOBER

1 Dairy Products	2 Poultry Slaughter	3	4 Cherry Utilization; Celery	5 Red Clover Seed
8 Holiday	9	10 Vegetables	11 Egg Products	12 Crop Production
15 Milk Production	16	17	18 Cattle on Feed; Cold Storage	19 Livestock Slaughter; Eggs, Chickens, & Turkeys; Alfalfa Seed
22 Naval Stores	23 Grain Stocks; Rice Stocks	24 Peanut Stocks & Processing	25	26
29	30	31 Com. Fertilizers; Agricultural Prices		

DECEMBER

3 Poultry Slaughter; Com. Fertilizers by Class	4 Celery	5	6 Egg Products	7
10	11 Crop Production	12	13 Milk Production	14 Cattle on Feed; Potato Stocks
17	18	19 Cold Storage	20 Livestock Slaughter; Eggs, Chickens, & Turkeys; Naval Stores	21 Hogs & Pigs; Winter Wheat & Rye; Vegetable - Prelim.; Peanut Stocks & Processing
24	25 Holiday	26	27 Farm Numbers	28
31 Dairy Products; Com. Fertilizers; Agricultural Prices				

To add your name to the mailing list for any reports, indicate the report title and send your name, address, and zip code to: Crop Reporting Board, Room 0005-South, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Summaries of many major reports can be heard on USDA's Farmers' Newslines. Dial toll free (800) 424-7964.

HOTLINE TO MARKET NEWS

Many producers are just a dial away from around-the-clock market reports on their farm products. Through the Federal-State market news service, recorded briefings on prices and trading of agricultural commodities are available over the phone in many areas.

Below are numbers of automatic telephone answering devices for information on fruits and vegetables, cotton, tobacco, and dairy products. Numbers for grain and livestock market news were listed in the January-February issue. Unless otherwise stated, numbers are in operation throughout the year.

Instant market news phone calls are usually free only in the local area, but a few States offer toll-free "800" lines for within-State calls. Phone numbers change from time to time so, in case of difficulty in reaching a number, ask the information operator for the Federal-State market news recorder in the city listed.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Alabama

Foley: (205) 943-5170, Potatoes
May-June

Rainville: (205) 638-6215,
Potatoes June-July

Arizona

Nogales: (602) 281-0625, Melons
and Vegetables Dec.-June

Phoenix: (602) 279-4134,
Vegetables Sept.-July

Yuma: (602) 782-9597, Vegetables
June-July

California

Bakersfield: (805) 323-0727,
Potatoes and Vegetables

Blythe: (714) 922-7151, Melons and
Vegetables Nov.-April;

Coachella: (714) 398-0353, Grapes
El Centro: (714) 352-5130, Melons
and Vegetables

Fallbrook: (714) 728-6014,
Avocado

Fresno: (209) 233-0341, Fruits year
round; (209) 488-5617, Melons July-
Sept.

Los Angeles: (213) 622-3922,
Fruits; (213) 622-3973, Vegetables
May-Oct.

Salinas: (408) 449-7221,
Vegetables

San Francisco: (415) 397-6513,
Wine Grapes Aug.-Dec.

Santa Maria: (805) 343-2308,
Vegetables

Colorado

Monte Vista: (303) 852-2568,
Potatoes Sept.-June

Delaware

Dover: (302) 697-2345, Potatoes
July-Sept.

District of Columbia

Washington: (202) 447-2599,
Honey and Sugar

Florida

Belle Glade: (305) 996-0235,
Vegetables Oct.-May

Fort Myers: (813) 332-2114, Citrus
and Vegetables Oct.-June

Fort Pierce: (305) 465-5239, Citrus
and Vegetables Oct.-June

Immokalee: (813) 657-2793,
Vegetables and Watermelons Oct.-
June

Miami: (305) 666-7106, Fruits and
Vegetables; (305) 661-7038,
Ornamental Crops,

Plant City: (813) 754-2826, Melons
and Vegetables Jan.-June

Pompano Beach: (305) 946-4343,
Vegetables Oct.-May
Trenton: (904) 463-2427,
Watermelons June-July
Winter Park: (305) 628-0319,
Citrus and Vegetables

Georgia

Forest Park: (404) 361-5211, Fruits
and Vegetables
Fort Valley: (912) 825-7450,
Peaches May-July
Thomasville: (912) 226-7567,
Melons, Vegetables and Pecans;
(800) 342-1192 (Within State only)
Fruits and Vegetables

Hawaii

Honolulu: (808) 548-7171
Hilo: (808) 935-9209
Lihue: (808) 245-2125
Kahului: (808) 244-5226

Idaho

Fruitland: (208) 452-3722, Onions
Aug.-June
Idaho Falls: (208) 522-3979,
Potatoes Aug.-June

Illinois

Chicago: (312) 353-0240

Louisiana

Baton Rouge: (504) 925-4640

Maine

Presque Isle: (207) 764-3948,
Potatoes Oct.-June

Maryland

Jessup: (301) 799-7278

Massachusetts

Boston: (617) 727-7937

Michigan

Bay City: (517) 893-8961, Potatoes
June-Sept.

Benton Harbor: (616) 925-1096,
Fruits and Vegetables June-April

Detroit: (313) 841-1431, Fruits and
Vegetables

Minnesota

Minneapolis: (612) 725-2291

Mississippi

State-wide: (1-800) 222-7188 (With-
in State only), Pecans and
Watermelons July-Dec.

Missouri

St. Louis: (314) 425-4559

New Jersey

Bridgeton: (609) 455-2510
Hightstown: (609) 448-1482

New Mexico

Las Cruces: (505) 646-4928,
Vegetables Oct.

New York

Albion: (716) 589-5863, Fruits and
Vegetables Aug.-April.

Lockport: (716) 433-5988, Fruits
and Vegetables Aug.-April

Newburgh: (914) 651-4626,
Vegetables July-May

Oswego: (315) 343-9509,
Vegetables July-Aug.

Riverhead: (516) 727-6884, Pota-
toes July-March

New York City: (212) 542-3564,
Fruits and Vegetables

North Carolina

Elizabeth City: Ask operator for
number of Federal-State Market
News Recorder, Potatoes June-July

Faison: (919) 267-9211, Vegetables
June-July

Hendersonville: (704) 693-0491,
Fruits and Vegetables July-Oct.

Ohio

Cincinnati: (513) 621-2542

Cleveland: (216) 361-9936

Oklahoma

Oklahoma City: (405) 521-0466,
Pecans Oct.-Dec.

Statewide: (1-800) 522-8171
(Within State only) Pecans Oct.-Dec.

Oregon

Merrill: (503) 798-5733, Potatoes
Oct.-May

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia: (215) 597-4429,
Fruits and Vegetables

Pittsburgh: (412) 644-2678, Fruits
and Vegetables

South Carolina

Columbia (803) 758-7200, Fruits
and Vegetables

Johnston: Ask operator for
Federal-State Market News
Recorder, Peaches June-July

Spartanburg: Ask operator for
Federal Market News Recorder,
Peaches June-July

Texas

Austin: (512) 475-3845, Melons
and Pecans May-Dec.

Dallas: (214) 749-2865, Fruits and
Vegetables

Hereford: (806) 364-0129, Vegetables July-Sept.

McAllen: (512) 383-2492, Citrus Grower Prices Sept.-June

San Antonio: (512) 222-9065, Vegetables

Uvalde: (512) 278-6794, Vegetables Oct.-June

Weslaco: (512) 682-2581, Fruits and Vegetables Sept.-June

Virginia

Onley: (804) 787-4228, Potatoes June-Aug.

Richmond: (804) 786-8749, Fruits and Vegetables

Windsor: (804) 242-6978, Watermelons July-Aug.

Washington

Seattle: (206) 725-9145, Fruits and Vegetables

Yakima: (509) 453-6073, Fruits; (509) 452-7859, Vegetables

Wisconsin

Antigo: (715) 623-2838, Potatoes Aug.-April

Madison: (608) 266-6760, Potatoes Aug.-April

Stevens Point: (715) 341-6463, Potatoes Aug.-April

COTTON

Alabama

Montgomery: (205) 262-8408, Oct.-Dec.

Arizona

Phoenix: (602) 253-4793 Oct.-Jan.

Arkansas

Blytheville: (501) 763-7549 Sept.-Dec.

Little Rock: (501) 375-6524 local, Oct.-Jan.; (1-800) 482-1228 (Within State only) Oct.-Nov.

California

Bakersfield: (805) 323-7873 Oct.-Jan.

El Centro: (714) 353-4521, Oct.-Jan.

Fresno: (209) 486-0511 Oct.-Jan.

Georgia

Macon: (1-800) 342-1792 (Within State only) Oct.-Dec.

Louisiana

Winnsboro: (318) 435-3557 Oct.-Dec.

Mississippi

Greenwood: (601) 455-2403 Oct.-Jan.; (1-800) 222-9305 (Within State only) Oct.-Nov.

New Mexico

Las Cruces: (505) 646-4928 Nov.-Dec.

Oklahoma

Altus: (405) 482-1024, Oct.-Dec.

South Carolina

Columbia: (803) 771-0030, Oct.-Dec.

Tennessee

Memphis: (901) 521-2936 Oct.-Jan.

Texas

Abilene: (915) 676-4211, Oct.-Jan.

El Paso: (505) 646-4928

Corpus Christi: (512) 883-2310

Harlingen: (512) 425-1061 Aug.-Oct.

Lubbock: (806) 763-7870

Waco: (817) 752-0443

TOBACCO

Georgia

Valdosta: (912) 247-3413, July-Sept.

Kentucky

Lexington: (800) 432-9532 (Within State only); (606) 255-6910 local Nov. 20-Feb.

Maryland

Cheltenham: (301) 782-7146 April-June

North Carolina

Raleigh: (919) 755-4083 July-Nov.

South Carolina

Dillon: (803) 774-8841 July-Oct.

DAIRY

Illinois

Chicago: (312) 858-8188

New York

New York City: (212) 683-3780

Wisconsin

Madison: (608) 266-0706

Briefings

RECENT REPORTS BY USDA OF ECONOMIC, MARKETING, AND RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING FARMERS.

PRICE WATCH . . . In mid-May, farmers were paying 13 percent more than a year ago for commodities and services, interest, taxes, and wages, according to USDA's Crop Reporting Board. At the same time, however, prices received by farmers for their products were up 14 percent from the previous year. From April to May, prices paid gained one-half of 1 percent as higher prices for feed, fuels and energy, autos and trucks, and family living items offset lower prices for feeder livestock. Prices received by farmers were up three-fourths of 1 percent, with hay, wheat, citrus, corn, potatoes, and broilers the big gainers.

FARM PROGRAM SIGNUP . . . Farmers signing up for the wheat and feed grain programs have indicated they plan to set aside or otherwise divert 22.1 million acres of cropland in 1979. In 1978, 23.5 million acres were allocated by farmers for these programs. This year, 927,000 farms enrolled, about 40 percent of the 2.3 million eligible. Last year's enrollment totaled 1.2 million. Signed-up acreage includes 10.6 million under the wheat program, 6.2 million under the feed grain program, 4.1 million voluntary diversion from corn and grain sorghum, and 1.2 million registered under the special wheat acreage grazing and hay programs.

RAISING THE EXPORT FORECAST . . . Strong global demand for food and fiber is now expected to boost U.S. agricultural exports to a record \$32 billion this fiscal year, up 17 percent from fiscal 1978. Most of the \$5 billion in anticipated growth will come from higher prices. However, export volume of major bulk commodities is forecast to rise about 4 percent from last year's 122 million metric tons. With imports likely to rise to \$16 billion, the agricultural trade surplus will widen.

LOANS TO TAP THE SUN . . . Since last fall, farm facility loans for solar grain drying systems have been offered in 27 counties and 10 States as part of a pilot energy-saving project. However, now grain farmers across the country are eligible for Government loans to build solar grain drying systems. Producers can apply for these loans through their county ASCS offices.

EMERGENCY FEED AID TALLY. . . USDA provided about \$47 million under the emergency feed program from last October through April to help U.S. livestock producers buy over 2.4 billion pounds of feed. Under the program, the Secretary of Agriculture may authorize financial aid to farmers when their livestock are threatened by conditions brought on by a natural disaster.

LATEST ON THE LABOR FRONT. . . Hired workers on U.S. farms numbered just over 1 million, down 4 percent from a year ago, during the Crop Reporting Board's April survey week. Nearly four out of 10 were employed on farms with nine or more hired workers, while less than two in 10 were working for farms hiring only one employee. About 46 percent of the employed workers received housing, room and board, meals, or other perquisites in addition to cash wages. Average earnings were \$2.42 an hour for those receiving both room and board and \$3.64 for those receiving only cash wages.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION. . . France—the world's second largest exporter of agricultural products in recent years—is expected to offer increasingly tough competition in the world market to U.S. farm producers. French agricultural exports totaled over \$12 billion in 1978, and ample exportable supplies are available this year. France is also becoming a stronger competitor in the U.S. market. U.S. farm product imports from France rose 40 percent in 1978 to \$401 million, while U.S. exports to France rose only 22 percent to \$568 million.

TENDING THE SHEEP AND GOATS. . . Farmers raising sheep and goats should benefit from two studies to be conducted under cooperative agreements with USDA's Science and Education Administration. Researchers at the University of Idaho, Moscow, will design and test a vaccine against epizootic abortion in ewes. Sheep flocks chronically infected with the disease lose 3 to 5 percent of their lamb crop annually. In the second study, scientists at Washington State University, Pullman, will survey Washington, Idaho, and Oregon to determine which internal parasites cause the most problems in sheep and goats. They will then develop control measures that small farm operations can afford because current diagnosis and treatment methods are too costly.

COOPERATIVES FOLLOW SUIT . . . Farmer cooperatives have felt the impact of the declining number of U.S. farmers. In 10 years, from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies, total membership in co-ops slid from 6,501,700 to 5,906,397. At the same time, the number of U.S. cooperatives declined from 8,125 to 7,535. The number of marketing co-ops dropped from 5,076 to 4,658, farm supply co-ops from 2,871 to 2,731, and service co-ops from 178 to 146.

Statistical Barometer

Item	1977	1978	1979
Agricultural prices:¹			
Prices paid (1967=100)			
Commodities and services,			
interest, taxes, and wage rates	204	219	247
Feed	205	188	202
Feeder livestock	166	229	308
Seed	269	275	287
Fertilizer	183	181	194
Agricultural chemicals	153	146	151
Fuels and energy	202	209	258
Autos and trucks	238	248	279
Tractors and self-propelled			
machinery	233	251	280
Building and fencing	226	243	268
Interest ²	331	396	487
Taxes ³	195	207	221
Family living (CPI) ⁴	180	192	212
Prices Received (1967=100)			
All farm products	192	215	246
All crops	211	212	220
All livestock and products	177	217	269
Farm employment and wage rates:⁵			
Total employment (1967=100)	85	80	72
Family labor (1967=100)	78	73	67
Hired labor (1967=100)	103	100	84
Wage rates (1967=100)	225	240	269

¹Index numbers for May 15 each year.

²Interest payable per acre on farm real estate debt.

³Farm real estate taxes payable per acre.

⁴Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers for the previous month.

⁵Annual averages for 1977 and 1978; data for 1979 obtained during survey week of April 8-14.

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